

2003 Legislative Results

Representative

Mike Armstrong

(R) 12th District

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

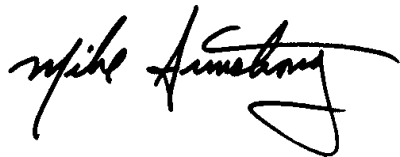
In order to gain your trust, I knew government was going to have to share in the challenges of our difficult economic times by balancing the state operating budget without raising taxes.

Facing a \$2.6 billion shortfall, it was not an easy task. During the two special sessions, we passed a bipartisan budget requiring no burdensome new taxes. That's \$360 million Washington taxpayers won't be paying this year, and every year into the future.

The 2003 legislative session was a big win for the taxpayers of Washington, families who need jobs, and the employers who provide them.

I welcome your questions and concerns regarding legislative issues. Don't hesitate to call on me. My job is to serve you, as well as represent you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Mike Armstrong
State Legislator

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State Government
Ranking Republican
Capital Budget
Transportation



Rep. Armstrong captures the attention of fellow lawmakers as he speaks to legislation on the House floor.

No new taxes was the battle cry...and we stuck to it

With our state facing the worst economic recession in a generation, the no-new-tax approach we stressed during the weeks of budget negotiations paid off for all of us. With a state budget deficit approaching \$3 billion, we insisted that government establish priorities. Economic conditions have forced families and employers across Washington to focus on the essentials and tighten their belts. Now government will do the same. Budget highlights:

- ✓ Close \$2.7 billion budget deficit without raising taxes.
- ✓ Protect health care services for children up to 250 percent of poverty.
- ✓ Protect services for the developmentally disabled and troubled youth.
- ✓ Increase I-728 funding from \$220 to \$254 per student.
- ✓ Increase total K-12 funding from \$5,367 to \$5,469 per student.
- ✓ Fund a 75-cent-per-hour pay raise for home health care workers.



Finally...progress on improving the state's business climate

The 2003 session achieved reforms for *all* employers. We produced substantial reforms to improve our state's business climate and encourage employers to invest in Washington.

- ✓ The sweeping changes we approved for the state's unemployment insurance system – a long time in coming – should do more than any other bill adopted this session to encourage our employers to remain in Washington or expand, which creates new jobs.
- ✓ Reforming the workers' compensation system – to put common-sense limits on claims for hearing loss due to occupational noise exposure – could save as much as \$200 million in the next two years, and up to \$30 million every year after that.

We must do even more work to continue to strengthen our economy and stimulate job growth, but the accomplishments of this session have finally put us on the right course.

Keep in touch

If you have questions or ideas about issues being addressed by the Legislature, I'd like to hear from you. Contact me directly via e-mail at:

armstron_mi@leg.wa.gov

Please send me an email, including your contact information and email address, if you'd like to receive information about a legislative issue during the 2004 session.

I'm active in the community during the legislative interim. Please let my office know of any meetings or events that are scheduled to occur and for which you'd like my attendance or participation. I'm always interested in your opinions and questions and look forward to seeing many of you soon.



Better health care for all is still far off

It's disappointing that House Republicans' push for senior prescription drug assistance was halted. We must do more for our seniors in the form of a real benefit.

Small group reform is also needed to help employers offer affordable coverage to their employees. Too many government mandates make health insurance too costly and force more lower- and middle-income workers to go without coverage.



Medical malpractice insurance reform should be addressed to bring down the cost of insurance, keep physicians in practice and reduce the overall cost of health care.

The only "health care" bragging right we have this session is new cost-efficiencies for state paid health coverage. Reforming and redesigning the Basic Health Plan—that offers subsidized and unsubsidized health care coverage for low-income people—will make it more affordable to cover Washingtonians in need (100,000 enrollees) without continued cost overruns for taxpayers.

Legislature falls short on meaningful transportation plan

The transportation plan that passed this session lacks the efficiencies and reforms needed to bring about meaningful improvements. **It doesn't do enough for 12th District families and employers** and spends too much money—more than \$600 million—on transit programs at the expense of road construction.



Every citizen in the state will pay for this transportation plan, but it ignores the needs of taxpayers outside the Puget Sound region. **More than 75 cents of every dollar in this plan will be spent in the Puget Sound region.**

It's too bad the House Republican plan that called for five reforms—including real permit streamlining, true contracting out, performance audits and a common-sense prevailing wage—was halted.

As it is, we're all paying another nickel at the pump for a transportation package that raises \$4.2 billion over 10 years—but **less than one percent (\$30 million) will be spent in North Central Washington**. The bottom line is rural areas like ours receive very little new highway projects, but we have more than half of the lane miles in the entire state. This is **not a responsible transportation improvement package that addresses Washington's problems from a statewide perspective.**

Protecting our water rights

A big win for our area is water reform legislation that protects water rights, provides for watershed planning and ensures local communities, farmers and wildlife have adequate water resources.

The quality of life we enjoy in Washington should not be a battle of the environment vs. jobs. I believe both can and should coexist through a balance of proper and responsible management.

Of particular importance to the 12th District is the new law that clarifies the state's authority to regulate water pollution by fixing the Department of Ecology's misguided translation of pollution. **No longer will simply taking water out of the Methow Valley River—or other streams—constitute pollution.**

Other legislative wins:

- ✓ Ensure water right holders won't have their water rights taken away because of water quality issues.
- ✓ Allow cities to grow in their water right without first being required to put it to use.
- ✓ Implement a statewide planning process for watersheds.
- ✓ Avoid park closures.
- ✓ Begin mercury cleanup.



Losses include:

- ✓ No legislation to replace or add a well without having to apply for a transfer or change application.
- ✓ The governor vetoed a bipartisan-passed bill that would have clarified language to allow the use of body-gripping traps for nuisance animals and wildlife-population controls.



Rep. Armstrong confers with House Republican Deputy Leader, Rep. Richard DeBolt of Centralia.

INSIDE:

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